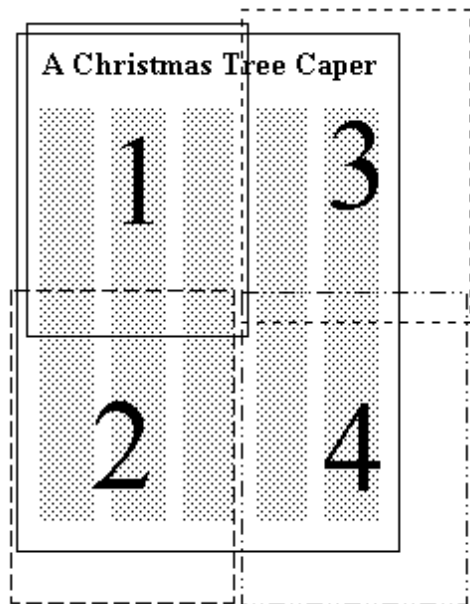


NOTE: This newspaper appearance was divided and enlarged to fill 8 ½" x 11" pages, roughly in the manner shown below.



**G**EORGE CLARK'S sports car drew up to the curb beside me as I walked on the sidewalk. He leaned over and opened the door on the passenger side.

"May I ask suspiciously what Jerry McGill is doing in this neighborhood tonight?" George said. "This is supposed to be my evening with Harriet. And you know it, Jerry."

I slipped in beside him. "I'm baby-sitting," I said. "I volunteered."

The car moved forward. "It's sneaky, Jerry," George said. "Downright sneaky. Now I suppose I'll have to baby-sit to show I can do it, too."

The car came to a stop at Harriet's small cottage. George rang the bell.

"Ordinarily, I'm not the type to marry a widow with two children," George said. "However, in this case, I'll make an exception."

Billy, who is 9 opened the door. "Hi," he said. "Mommie's not ready yet."

We followed Billy into the living room and sat down before the television.

Diana, who is 11, put down her book of poetry, and sat cross-legged at my feet. She gazed up at me and sighed. "I can't understand some of this poetry," she said dreamily, "but it sounds beautiful."

**G**EORGE waited until the commercial before starting his pitch. "How would you like a horse, Billy?" he asked.

Billy turned his head and looked at me.

"I pass," I said.

Billy's head swiveled back to George. "I'd rather have a pony."

"I'll get you two," George promised.

Harriet came down the stairs, her blond hair shimmering. She smiled at both of us.

# TRIANGLE WITH

By JACK RITCHIE and IRMA REITCI

A SHORT SHORT S

"Uncle George should marry mother," Diana said. Her eyes filled with a soft light. "And then in six or seven years..."



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"Money was no object," George said.

Harriet took off her coat. "Let's keep this friendly," she said, smiling. "Good-night, boys." She kissed both of us on the cheek.

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Harriet came down the stairs, her blond hair shimmering. She smiled at both of us.

"Now let's see," she said. "This is Wednesday. That means I go out with George."

"I volunteer to baby-sit tomorrow night," George said quickly. "I not only have money, but I'm a good guy, too. I believe in playing fair, if it can't be avoided."

"Don't let them give you any trouble, Jerry," Harriet said. "They're supposed to be in bed by 9 o'clock."

"I can stay up till 9:15," Diana said importantly. "That will give us 15 minutes alone." She gave me a soulful look.

**A**FTER Harriet and George left, I selected an easy chair. Diana put her head on my knee and her blue eyes regarded me worshipfully.

"What do you do for a living?" Billy asked.

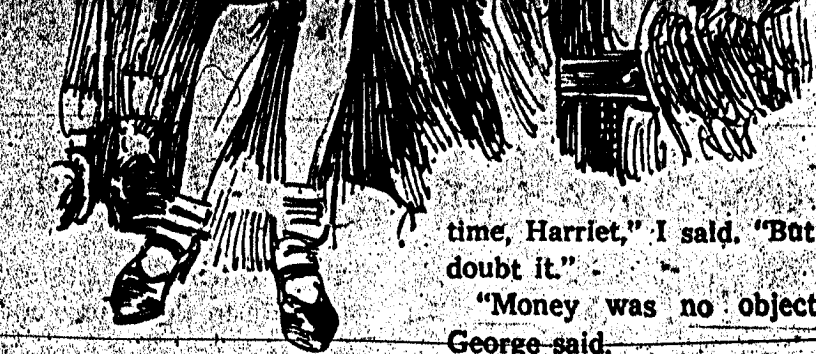
"I'm an electrician," I said. "I go to night school. Tuesdays and Fridays."

"Uncle George is rich," Billy said. "That's what I'm going to be when I grow up."

"I once knew a boy who had a pony," I said. "One day he fell off and broke his arm."

"You have such beautiful eyes," Diana said. "Do you know any poetry?"

I yawned. "Don't you think



it's almost time for you children to hit the hay?"

"Yes," Diana said sweetly, looking at Billy. "It's time for children to go to bed."

Billy looked disgusted. "Girls! I bet we have ice cream when Uncle George baby-sits tomorrow night."

**P**ROMPTLY at 9, Billy raised himself to his feet. I looked hopefully at Diana.

"Nine-fifteen," she insisted.

"Billy," I said magnanimously, "you may stay up until 9:15."

"But I'm sleepy," he protested.

"Sit down!" I commanded.

Fifteen minutes later I said cheerily, "All right now, children. Off to bed with you. It's 9:15."

Billy fell asleep while buttoning his pajamas.

Diana sat on top of her bed. "Recite me a poem," she begged.

"All I know is 'Danny Deever,'" I said.

Diana sighed as she put her head on the pillow. "All right. I'll forgive you. I guess I could forgive you anything."

I went downstairs and sat in the easy chair. At 12 o'clock somebody shook me, and I looked into the face of George Clark.

"Good-hearted, that I am," he said, "I'm offering you a ride home."

"I hope you had a good

time, Harriet," I said. "But I doubt it."

"Money was no object," George said.

Harriet took off her coat. "Let's keep this friendly," she said, smiling. "Good-night, boys." She kissed both of us on the cheek.

**T**HURSDAY evening I parked behind the Jaguar.

Billy answered the door. "I see you fixed your car," he said. "Can you fix a television?"

"Everything seems to light up, but there's no picture," he said.

"Buy another set," I suggested.

"Do you know any poetry?" Diana asked him, then her eyes went to me. "Oh, I think you look lovely in that new suit."

"Mine are custom tailored," George said. He wiped his brow. "Two children to entertain, and no television! It frightens me."

"Why don't you call a repairman?" Billy suggested.

George regarded him fondly. "That boy has a head on his shoulders." He began paging through the telephone book.

Harriet came into the room, bringing the scent of violets with her. "Good-night, children. Be good."

**A**S we waited for our order in the restaurant, Harriet's eyes become pensive. "I'm thinking," she explained. "So am I," I said. "I think I could send the children through college. Of course,

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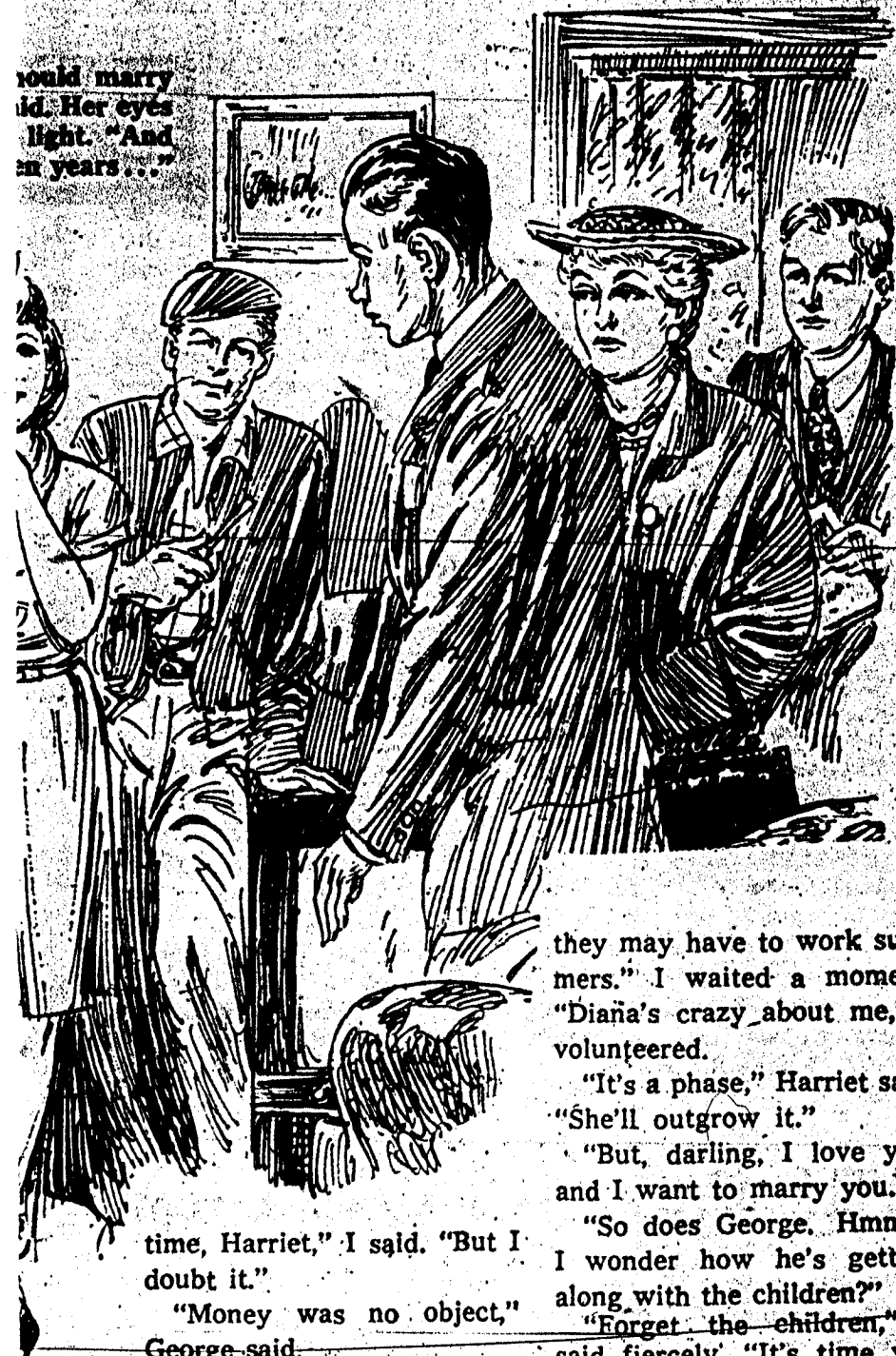
# ANGLE WITH FIVE SIDES

CHIE and IRMA REITCI

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A SHORT SHORT STORY

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THURSDAY evening I

they may have to work summers." I waited a moment. "Diana's crazy about me," I volunteered.

"It's a phase," Harriet said. "She'll outgrow it."

"But, darling, I love you, and I want to marry you."

"So does George. Hmmm! I wonder how he's getting along with the children?"

"Forget the children," I said fiercely. "It's time you thought of yourself!"

"But I can't! Not until I've thought of the children," Harriet argued.

"Lots of children are reared on an electrician's wages," I said.

word in?" Harriet interrupted.

"I vote for Jerry," Billy said.

"Billy," George said, with shock in his voice. "You've stabbed me!"

"Well—I didn't know you liked that poetry stuff," Billy said. "And uncles always buy more things for their nephews than fathers do for their sons. You still could be my uncle."

"Speak up, Diana," I said confidently.

DIANA looked at me with melting eyes. "I vote for Uncle George."

George and I both blinked. "Uncle George should marry Mother," Diana said. Her eyes filled with a soft light as she looked at me. "And then in six or seven years..."

"Does anybody mind if I say something?" Harriet asked.

"We could toss a coin," George suggested. "I have a gold one."

"Will you please listen to me?" Harriet pleaded.

"Let the lady have the floor," the repairman urged.

"I have to consider what's best for the children," Harriet began.

"I changed my mind," I said. "They won't have to work summers."

"Money isn't an important part of this decision," Harriet continued.

"Money doesn't matter," I agreed.

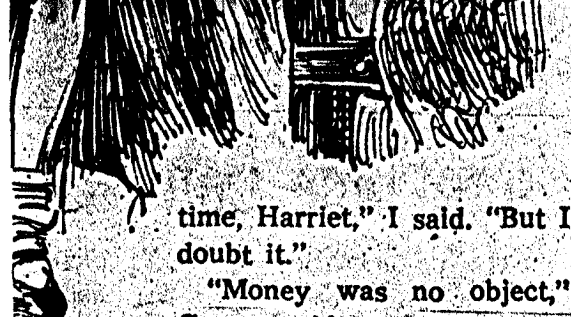
"But it does, Jerry," she said.

I felt vaguely sick.

"I agree with the lady," the repairman said. "Seventeen bucks."

"Why does a woman love a man?" Harriet's eyes went





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"So does George. Hmmm! I wonder how he's getting along with the children?"

"Forget the children," I said fiercely. "It's time you thought of yourself!"

"But I can't! Not until I've thought of the children," Harriet argued.

"Lots of children are reared on an electrician's wages," I said.

Harriet didn't answer.

"Someday I'll be an electrical engineer," I added.

"Let's eat," Harriet said.

We ate our dinner without further conversation.

"Let's get this thing settled tonight!" I said, when we were back in the car.

"All right," Harriet agreed meekly.

I stopped my car behind the Jaguar, and took Harriet by the hand.

"One of us has got to go," I said loudly as I strode into the living room.

A man came from behind the television set. "O.K., Mister. If that's the way you want it. But I just got here..."

"Sorry!" I said. "Where is that character?"

"Right here," George said, entering the room with a forefinger between the pages of a book. "You're back early. A quarrel, I hope."

"Harriet," I commanded. "Look at both of us and make your choice."

"I will admit that I'm not handsome," George said. "But I improve with age, like a violin. Also I have a sterling character..."

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"But it does, Jerry," she said.

I felt vaguely sick. "I agree with the lady," the repairman said. "Seventeen bucks."

"Why does a woman love a man?" Harriet's eyes went from me to George. "For many things. But most of all, for what he is."

"George is gay and charming. But he's never done anything real or worth while in his life. And if he ever lost his money, I'm afraid he'd even lose his sense of humor."

**H**ARRIET turned to me. "I think I love Jerry because I know I can depend on him. Money, or no money, in sickness and in health, Jerry always will be the same wonderful person he is now..."

"Well, Jerry," George said. "Don't just stand there!"

I took Harriet in my arms, and it was sometime before we came back to this world.

"I paid the repairman," George said. "And now I'm going to leave with my money-propped sense of humor. Anybody care to say good-bye?"

"Don't take my poetry book along," Diana said. "I'll need some consolation."

After George left, I took Harriet into my arms again.

"I'm beginning to think I made a mistake," Billy said, putting a spoonful of ice cream into his mouth. "This could be worse than poetry!"